

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PRS-01 L-03 NSCE-00 SSO-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15
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O R 271108Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5266
INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 01586

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, MPOL, GW, US
SUBJECT: GEORG LEBER: THE PROBLEMS INCREASE

REF: BONN 01435

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE PRESSURE ON DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER HAS INCREASED OVER THE PAST 48 HOURS. THIS HAS COME AS A RESULT OF DISCLOSURES THAT HIS SECRETARY HAD BEEN BUGGED IN 1974 ON SUSPICION OF SPYING, THAT LEBER LEARNED OF THIS OVER TWO YEARS LATER, AND THAT HE DID NOT INFORM OTHERS IN THE GOVERNMENT. AS A RESULT, IT IS CHARGED, THE FRG MINISTER OF INTERIOR SUBSEQUENTLY, INCORRECTLY TESTIFIED ABOUT ANOTHER BUGGING CASE THAT IT WAS THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND. END SUMMARY.

1. DISCLOSURE IN THE JANUARY 24 ISSUE OF THE SLICK
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LOWBROW "QUICK" MAGAZINE THAT DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S JUNIOR SECRETARY HAD BEEN SUBJECT TO EAVESDROPPING IN THE WINTER OF 1974/5, INCLUDING A BUG IN HER APARTMENT, HAS SET OFF A STORM OF PRESS STORIES AND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE PUTTING ADDED PRESSURE ON THE ALREADY EMBATTLED LEBER.

2. AS THE STORY HAS UNFOLDED, LEBER'S SECRETARY (MRS. HILDEGARD HOLZ) WAS SUBJECTED TO EAVESDROPPING, INCLUDING THE BUGGING OF HER APARTMENT, BY THE FRG MILITARY COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE SERVICE IN THE WINTER OF 1974/5, ON SUSPICION OF POSSIBLE ESPIONAGE. SURVEILLANCE FAILED TO PRODUCE ANY EVIDENCE AND MRS. HOLZ WAS APPARENTLY CLEARED OF SUSPICION. LEBER HIMSELF WAS APPARENTLY INFORMED OF THESE EVENTS ONLY ON MARCH 11, 1977 AT A TIME WHEN ANOTHER BUGGING CASE (THE TRAUBE AFFAIR, INVOLVING A NUCLEAR SCIENTIST) WAS IN THE HEADLINES. UPON LEARNING SO BELATEDLY OF THE SURVEILLANCE, APPARENTLY UNDERTAKEN ON THE INITIATIVE OF MILITARY COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE (MILITAERISCHE ABSCHIRMDIENST, ACRONYMED M.A.D.), LEBER FIRED THE M.A.D. COMMANDER, B/GENERAL SCHERER.

3. SUBSEQUENTLY, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SEPARATE TRAUBE AFFAIR, INTERIOR MINISTER MAIHOFFER TESTIFIED ON MARCH 16, 1977 THAT THE TRAUBE AFFAIR HAD BEEN "UNIQUE" AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO OTHER CONCEALED BUGGINGS. (BUGGING THROUGH EMPLACEMENT OF CONCEALED LISTENING DEVICES IS A GREY AREA NOT SANCTIONED BY LAW, IN CONTRAST TO TELEPHONE TAPPING, FOR WHICH PRESCRIBED LEGAL PROCEDURES EXIST.)

4. LEBER HAS BEEN CHARGED BY THE OPPOSITION WITH FAILURE TO INFORM HIS GOVERNMENTAL
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COLLEAGUES AND THE PARLIAMENT OF A POSSIBLY ILLEGAL SITUATION RELATING TO HIS MINISTRY AND PERSONAL OFFICE WHICH HE HIMSELF JUDGED SERIOUS ENOUGH TO WARRANT CASHIERING A SENIOR OFFICER. (PRESS REPORTS SAY THEY LEARNED OF THE MATTER FROM "QUICK" MAGAZINE.) FURTHER, HE HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF CONTRIBUTING TO A SERIOUS MISSTATEMENT BY THE INTERIOR MINISTER. IN THE MIND OF THE OPPOSITION, THESE CHARGES ARE INTENDED TO TAKE ON AN ADDED SIGNIFICANCE WHEN PUT ON TOP OF CRITICISM THAT LEBER WAS UNINFORMED AND/OR DID NOT INFORM OTHERS IN THE LUTZE SPY CASE.

5. ADDING SOMEWHAT TO THE GARISH REPORTS OF THIS LATEST CASE ARE REPORTS THAT THE M.A.D. USED UNORTHODOX TACTICS TO EMPLANT THE BUG IN LEBER'S SECRETARY'S APARTMENT. ACCORDING TO ONE PRESS ACCOUNT (DIE WELT), M.A.D. AGENTS USED FALSE PRETEXTS, INCLUDING UNIFORMS OF THE POSTAL SERVICE, TO ENTER THE SUBJECT'S APARTMENT, OSTENSIBLY TO CHECK FOR CIRCUIT FAILURES THAT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A TELEVISION RECEPTION PROBLEM IN PART OF BONN. THE ARTICLE ALSO ALLEGES THAT M.A.D. DELIBERATELY CREATED THE RECEPTION PROBLEM AS A DIVERSION. (WE HAVE NO

CONFIRMATION THAT THESE DRAMATIC DETAILS ARE ACCURATE
AND REPORT THEM TO CONVEY A FLAVOR OF HOW THE ISSUE IS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 01586

BEING HANDLED IN THE FRG PRESS.)

6. ON THE EVENING OF MAY 26, LEBER FACED HARSH CRITICISM
IN A TENSE EVENING IN THE BUNDESTAG DURING A SESSION
MEANT TO BE DEVOTED TO BUDGET QUESTIONS (AND DURING
WHICH THE FRG DEFENSE BUDGET WAS PASSED). LEBER HIMSELF
STATED THAT THE EAVESDROPPING OPERATION WAS WHOLLY A
SUBORDINATE'S DECISION OF WHICH HE KNEW NOTHING AT THE
TIME. IN EFFECT, HIS REMARKS WERE MEANT TO UNDERSCORE
THAT HE WAS A MAN OF HONOR. OPPOSITION LEADER KOHL
CHARGED THAT A "BANANA REPUBLIC" STYLE OF GOVERNMENT WAS
DEVELOPING IN THE FRG IN WHICH GOVERNMENT FIGURES KEPT
OTHERS AND THE PARLIAMENT IN THE DARK ON CONTROVERSIAL
DEVELOPMENTS. HE CALLED FOR LEBER'S RESIGNATION. BOTH
CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT AND SPD BUNDESTAG LEADER WEHNER STRES-
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SED THAT LEBER WAS A MAN OF TALENT AND DECENCY WHOM THE
OPPOSITION WAS SEEKING TO DEFAME FOR POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY.

7. COMMENT. A FURTHER DIMENSION HAS BEEN ADDED TO THE
PRESSURES ALREADY ON LEBER. APART FROM NEW CHARGES FROM
THE OPPOSITION AND AN ADDED LAYER OF CONTROVERSY SUR-
ROUNDING THE DEFENSE MINISTER, THE LATEST CHARGES
ALSO SEEM TO HAVE STRUCK SENSITIVE CHORDS IN SOME OF
THE MEMBERS OF THE SPD AND FDP PARLIAMENTARY COALITION,
INCREASING THEIR SKEPTICISM ABOUT LEBER'S FUTURE AS
DEFENSE MINISTER. AT THE MOMENT, THAT FUTURE IS WHOLLY
UP IN THE AIR.
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